EUI WORKING PAPERS IN HISTORY

EUI Working Paper **HEC** No. 91/10

The Middle East and European Security in the Fifties: A Historical Assessment

LORENZA SEBESTA

European University Institute, Florence

Please note
As from January 1990 the EUI Working Paper Series is divided into six sub-series, each sub-series will be numbered individually (e.g. EUI Working Paper **LAW** No 90/1).

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

EUI Working Paper **HEC** No. 91/10

The Middle East and European Security in the Fifties: A Historical Assessment

LORENZA SEBESTA

BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

Printed in Italy in April 1991
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico (FI)
Italy

The Middle East and European Security in the Fifties: a Historical Assessment.

European security concerns go well beyond the European theatre. As it has clearly come out during these last months, international relations have experienced such an evolution that the so called 'out-of-area' threats not only seem most plausible, but also most difficult to tackle.

Of all of them, the Eastern Mediterranean-Middle East (generally speaking the area which goes from Greece in the west to Pakistan in the east and from Turkey in the north to Egypt in the south) has always had a long tradition of being a risky issue.

This phenomenon has two kinds of roots: 1.the long term tradition of European intervention and permanent militarized presence in the area -which has created long-rooted and large economic-strategic interests; 2. the difficulties experienced by the Middle Eastern states themselves after II World War to come to terms with the problem of political stability. This last situation has been partly linked to the question of the phasing out of colonial ties and the rising of anti-western nationalism and partly to the negative synergy emerging from the connection of these questions with structural long term problems of the area such as underdevelopment, Arab-Israel antagonism, Hashemite-Wahabite feud.

This paper is primarly concerned with the first set of problems (those pertaining to western intervention, with special reference to the British and American cases) and with their development in the aftermath of II World War up to the mid Fifities. It is built around the main question : is it possible to explain, historically, why military action has become the only plausible way to come to terms with security problems in the Middle East? To do this I principally assumed that the late forties and fifities were a period when exceptionally great chances and opportunities were offered while, in a parallel way, exceptionally important changes in the international arena were influencing the Middle East. My conclusions are that this was a time when opportunities were missed and that British and American patterns of action in that period set the quality of the militarization of western diplomacy as we know it today.

The post-war origins of British-American collaboration over the Middle East-Eastern Mediterranean.

There were three main western strategic interests at stake after the II World War in the Middle East:

1. petroleum, the key to the wealth of western industrial nations rapidly converting from coal to cheaper oil after the war -while the United States, the major world's producer, was becoming a net importer too ([1]).

2. the possibility of counter-attacking the Soviet highly industrialized caucasian areas from the bomber bases of Suez (and, later, Marocco and Lybia) in case Russia forced the withdrawal of all western forces from continental Europe and from Great Britain - which was the hypothesis that was most likely for D+6months period under Anglo- American emergency war plan before the foundation of NATO ([2]) and which remained highly plausible after the new military alliance was in formation.

3. the maintenance of the lines of communication (LOC) through the Mediterranean in order to get a.the oil coming from the pipelines ending on the Levant shores or through the Suez Canal b.the supply and reinforcement coming from the Far East (a 50% time saving was obtained going through the Suez Canal instead of the longer Good Hope Cape Route).

The importance of these interests was differently rated in the United Kigdom and in the United State. For the British, the Middle East was the primary area of security concern after the war. It represented one of the main pillars of the British security system - after the defence of the national territory and the control of the main Lines of Communication leading to Great Britain ([3]). Confronted with a crucial economic crises in Winter 1946-47 and with the cut asked by the Treasury on expenses for the huge service personnel deployed overseas, the Government decided to take action ([4]). Prime Minister Attlee's previous call for a total withdrawal had been already dismissed by Spring 1946 ([5]) and a more incremental approach preferred. This included the withdrawl from India (due by

June 1948 and later anticipated to August 1947), the handing over to the United Nations of the mandate on Palestine and the reduction in overseas committments (in the Middle East and, to a lesser extent, in the Balkans)([6]).

The hasty and sudden British retreat from Greece and Turkey was, thus, one of the measures taken by an overcommitted government, not the most important one. This action and the following American behaviour caused mutual resentment both in the American Department of State (which considered it "a far too casual" retreat) and among British leadership (Eden reproched the Americans of being ever watchful for opportunities to turn British problems into American advantages ([7]). This situation thus set the path for analogous reproaches all along the fifties.

The so called Pentagon Talks over Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (October 16 to November 7, 1947) were originated by Bevin's response to strong American reproaches over the British "eagerness to pass the buck" in other's hands ([8]) -which eventually led the Americans to assume responsabilities in the violent and chaotic Greek civil war in support of an antidemocratic government (and to build the Truman Doctrine around the military support for Greece and Turkey).

American's willingness to confine the talks to the military aspects of the question was opposed by Bevin. Bevin had been stressing since 1946 that the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean question be placed in the political context of anti-Soviet containment. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs had succinctly put it speaking

about Mediterranean in a memorandum written for the Cabinet in March 1946 "If we move out Russia will move in" ([9]).

The talks ended by a general understanding about the Middle East's being "vital" for both the United States and Great Britain. It was decided to use political, economic and "if necessary, military power" to help Italy, Greece, Turkey and Iran to maintain their "territorial integrity and political independence", "to make evident in firm but non provocative manner" American determination in preserving the security of the area ([10]).

Pentagon Talks ended by a misunderstanding on American willingness to take responsabilities over the Middle East. The United States were eager to make political use of military forces as they had done in Iran and Turkey (1946) -where, according to one eminent scholar, the path for American-Soviet antagonism in Europe was first set in ([11]); but they had no intention to become entangled in a definite military garantee for the area. "Whereas we propose to take a political stand against Soviet aggresion on Italy-Greece-Turkey-Iran front" was written in a memoranudm of november 1947 cleared with some of the most knowledgeable officials of the Department of State "it is not improbable that in the event of the necessity of recourse to arms, our military effort might be concentrated elsewhere with a view to most effective use of forces employed" ([12]).

The ratio of the disagreement hiding under the unitarian cover of fear of a "power vacuum" would become clear quickly.

For the British, this expression had been historically a sort of "last refuge of imperialism" -as it was called by a historian who can't be suspected of marxist simpathies, Gallagher ([13]). In practical terms, after the war, a large part of civilian and military officers seemed to share the opinion that the privileged position enjoyed by Great Britain in the international arena was directly linked to the holding of the Middle East "and all that this involves". The eventual surrender of responsability in that area was seen as deeply linked to the general withdrawl of Great Britain from the role of great power ([14]). Suez basis had, in this context, a highly symbolic value because its return in Egyptian hands was seen -and it would have continued to be so- as "a serious blow to British prestige throughout the Middle East" ([15]).

There was, thus, an intimate contradiction between the willingness to share power with the United States and the necessity to maintain the status of priviledged ally with respect to the Middle Eastern countries.

The United States, on the contrary, used the "power vacuum" notion mainly in an anti-communist sense. During conversations held in November 1949 between Michael Wright, British Assistant Under-Secretary in charge of Middle Eastern Affairs and George McGhee, American Director of the Division of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs in the State Department the difference in perspective was clarified. The two agreed over the usual perception of the Middle East as being "a vital cold war objective" ([16]); but to the American opinion that it would have been desirable "to back

nationalism against communism", the British retorted that "(...)support of nationalism could be used effectively against the spread of communism. But nationalism and communism could not be fought toghether" ([17]). And, as it was clear in the case of Egypt, the fight against nationalism had the first priority for the British while, historically, it could not hold the priority for American policy, traditionally rooted from the times of Wilson in the support of nationalisms. The American collusion with Great Britain entailed a main risk. As Nitze would have convincingly put it some years later (April 1952): "What we were proposing to do was to use our prestige but not our strenght to keep the British position. The British, however, have little phisical and less moral strenght in the area: consequently in embarking on this course we ran the danger of becoming involved in their general decline in the Middle East without being able effectively to halt it" ([18]).

In spite of the agreement over the opportunity to "read" the Middle East security question in terms of a cold war, the US and UK diverged on the means of doing so.

Setting the path for coordinated intervention

Since the end of the war, geographical priority in Soviet containment was given to Western Europe, broadly conceived as

embracing the Balkans as well. It represented the economic priority for the US and it was to Europe that most of the American financial and material aid had been devoted.

On the contrary, economic intervention was first provided to the Middle East only at the turn of the decade, under the provision of the so called "point four" -announced in Truman's inaugural address of January 1949 and formalized in the Title IV of Mutual Defense Assistance Program of 1950 ([19]). Even though, American aid was not oriented toward the granting of capital for the sponsorship of economic development (for obvious both tecnical and political reasons); funds were mainly devoted to rapsodic technical assistance in the devising of development projects such as disease control projects, geological survey and agricultural exploitation.

At the same time, development in international relations in the late fourties pointed a way for American intervention that was more linked to military rather than an economic set of actions. With the signature of the Brussels Treaty and, more definitly, Atlantic Alliance, western security began to be considered first of all in terms of military standards -a set which was intensified after the explosion of the Soviet A bomb. However, during the 1948 Pentagon Talks over the creation of a western defensive system (lately the Atlantic Pact), the British request for setting up a parallel regional security alliance focused on the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean was deferred to a later date and eventually dismissed ([20]).

The tendency (and the convenience at the same time) to structure the international relations in blocks, to fill the reference to 'perimeters' of influence with formal alliances, became steadier after the Korean war.

If political containment could not work because of the differences in British and American views about how to enforce it (and the role of arab nationalism in this process) and economic containment would have needed larger resources to be set in motion, the international mood seemed to point to militarization as the best way to enforce containment everywhere.

Generally speaking, the primary aim of the most important military alliance in the post war period (NATO) was to fight the supposed aggressive nature of the Soviet system (both in terms of internal subversion and external aggression) with the setting up of an efficient military machine. The concept of Soviet threat had, in this context, the maximum symbolic value and the methods of analogies (broadly used during Prague coup, Berlin crisis and Korean war) dominated political anlysis.

Not only this was the tactic which had offered Great Britain the opportunity of entangling the US to the defense of Europe, but this seemed to the new conservative Government (which came to power at the end of 1951 with Churchill as Prime Minister and Eden as Foreign Minister) to be the best way to reestablish the good old special relationship with the Atlantic ally.

But there were two main structural reasons which prevented consideration of the Middle East in terms of a single security area:

1. the lack of a unifying menace. Middle East was a "constant temptation" for the Soviet Union because expansion towards the south would without any doubt offer valuable prices as "protection of Caucasian oilfields, control of the Straits, control of Persian oil and access to the Persian Gulf", but it clearly represented the most open flank of USSR ([21]). Potentialities of expansion through means different from those of overt aggression did not lack (depressed economic and social conditions, arab anti-western nationalism, dissident groups as the Kurds and Armenians) but it would have been difficult to exploit them through the patterns applied in Eastern Europe. Communism was at odds with the Arabic culture; moreover, the communist party was outlawed in Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, non existant in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, unorganized in Jordan ([22]) .
The American National Security Council thus stated in 1951 that there was little danger that the USSR would take an aggressive military action unless a global war broke out. Even in this case, the Soviet offensive was not expected to develop to maximum intensity, even in the more pessimistic British view, before D+6 months ([23]).
Israeli menace, on the other hand, had a unifying function inside the Arab League, but could not possibly be considered as a workable tool to be exploited by western powers.

2. taking into account the strong fragmentation and divergent local interests of the countries involved, what was negatively resented was the lack of a strong federator in the terms of a hegemonic power inside or outside the area whose hegemony was legitimized and whose military global posture could function as a global guarantee for the whole region ([24]). The Arab League experiment failed both for the lack of legitimacy of the outside supporter (Great Britain) and over the points of disunity among the Arab world ([25]). Moreover, the Middle East hosted some of the more divisive issue in Anglo-American relationship such as the oil question ([26]), Suez basis and the Israeli problem -an exception to this general tendency being the case of arab-israeli dispute, were the US and GB found a common ground to begin conversations with both Egypt and Israel, but, as we will next see, they failed altogether.

That is why the United States were never enthousiastic about the schemes of a collective defense command envisaged by the British in the beginning of the fifties to solve in a multilateral framework the problem of the Egyptian denunciation of Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1938 (Middle East Command till 1952, afterwards called Middle East Defence organisation). On the other hand, bilateral Anglo-American collaboration came to be progressively focused on the problem of military collaboration. As a matter of fact, the best way to defend British permanence in the Suez basis appeared to be the stressing of its military importance in the framework of a counteroffensive against the Soviet Union. Thus, although the

pattern of a collective defense organization with an outside guarantor was unfeasible, the military realm came to the fore as the only minimum common denominator for a coordinated Anglo-American action.

Strategic and political difficulties in Anglo-American military collaboration over Middle East-Eastern Mediterranean issues.

Broadly speaking, **three were the potential ways of penetration from the Russian mainland to the Eastern-Mediterranean and Middle East region: the first**, beginning from the north, implied striking on the left wing side of the continental block -through Yugoslavia and Italy- and was ultimately aimed to the opening of a southern front against France and, eventually, to the control of the core of the Lines of Communication in the Central Mediterranean through the occupation of Sicily and Sardinia. **The second** implied an attack on the 'soft underbelly' of the Balkans -the Greek Thrace on the border between Greece and Turkey (the Dardanelles)- where the small depth of the front would have put in serious trouble any possible resistance; in this case, the Soviets would have tried to get to the Turkish Straits and open the way for their fleet into the Aegean Sea, and eventually to the Eastern Mediterranean lines of communications. **The third** line passed through the Caucasus or East of the Caspian Sea, on the border between Turkey and Iran, aiming at the Suez Canal and, eventually, to the Northern shores of Africa.

Not only LOC in the Mediterranean would have been deeply affected by this eventuality, but also the possession of Middle East petroleum, of African raw materials and the possibility to use Suez route.

The difference between British and American positions in the Middle East theatre cannot be clearly understood without pointing at the distinction between these three realms of defence.

The main preoccupation of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff was to stick on the periphery of the area (first and, eventually, second hypothesis), as a bridge linking that theatre and the one in central Europe.

On the other hand, the British always priviledged the potential threat to the Levant (the second and third hypothesis) in which so many political and materials interests were at stake. This explains why Great Britain was always against Italian entrance in the Atlantic Pact and mainly interested in holding the southern part of the Italian peninsula in case war broke out ([27]) or why the British opposed Turkey's entering NATO and only consented to it in exchange of the Turkish promise that it would be a stronghold for the setting up of a Middle East Defense Organisation (created in November 1951 and doomed to fail soon after) ([28]).

According to the American view, the southern flank was conceived as a support area for military actions to be held in Europe. Turkey was considered a pivotal country whose forces had to be maily devoted to the defense of the Balkan front. British, on the opposite, considered Turkey mainly as a westward extension of the Middle East.

A main dispute between British and Americans arose in NATO because of this main divergence. The United States thought about a Mediterranean Command subordinated to SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander, Europe), while the British wanted it to be set independently. The quarrel ended up with a temporary solution in favour of the American view, reversed after the return of Churchill to power at the end of 1951 with a more pro-British and more ambiguous resolution -there would be two chiefs of staff and a functional rather than geographical division of resonsabilities inside the theatre. The American representative, Robert Carney (Commander, Allied Focres, Southern Europe) , would have control over the American VI Fleet with the mission to support armies and air forces struggling in Europe; the British one, Lord Mountbatten (Commander, Allied Forces, Mediterranean) would have been charged to control the line of communications through the sea and cover military operations in the Middle East theater without the necessity, for the south eastern section, of having to refer to the hierarchical authority of SACEUR ([29]).

American fears over what has here been defined as the third threat seemed to be lessened by internal as well as external events happening in the Balkan front during the half of the fifties. On one hand Greece and Italy seemed to be definitely conquered to the cause of anti-communism, on the other hand Greece and Turkey were formally admitted in NATO (1952) ; military links were established between Jugoslavia and France, Great Britain and the U.S. (1953);

the provisional solution of the Trieste dispute at the end of 1954 opened the path for military collaboration between Jugoslavia and Italy while Greece, Turkey and Jugoslavia gathered in a defensive agreement in summer 1954 -the Bled Pact. But this last one was bound to fail for many reasons, among which the more relevant were 1. the prevalence of conflicting interests over common ones in the case of Greece and Turkey (Cyprus was the hot spot during that period) which could not be mediated -as happened in the NATO case- by the weak Jugoslavia 2.the growing importance of the reconciliation between Belgrad and the Soviet Union.

Moreover any possibile agreement was seriously hampered by the conceptual difficulty of defining the most suitable way to defend the Middle East from the third threat. The British themselves were never clear on what could or should be done and often tended to confuse the two perspective. Principally, there was difficulty in choosing between the so called **outer**[2] **ring** and **inner**[1] **ring** strategy - the first stressing on the importance of Palestine,Jordan and Egypt as being the defensive bastion with the last acceptable front passing through Israel on the Ramallah-Tel Aviv line and the second running from the Mediterranean Turkish coast opposite Cyprus along the Taurus mountains and the rim of the Turkish plateau to lake Van, then southwards along the arc of the Zagros Mountains down to Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf. Still in January 1954 the British Chiefs of Staff were adamant in stating that resources were not sufficient for this last defence line, thus leaving the first as the only credible option ([30]), but the prevailing British strategic concept

required that Soviet threat be met at the earliest possible time on the frontiers between Iraq and Iran ([31]). Bilateral military conversations with the Americans were held on the assumption that this last strategy should be followed by both the US and the UK ([32]).

A dilemma invested the problem: the Inner Ring strategy, though military feasible (i.e. tenable with the military forces at hand) was politically impossibile because it split Israel in two and because it would have entailed Arab forces (as the Jordan Arab Legion of General Glubb Pasha) to fight along with the British for the sake of Israel. The Outer Ring strategy, on the opposite, was militarly implausible -for lack of material and human resources, problems of supplying and pre-stocking- even if it could have been politically feasible, in the sense that alliances could have been stipulated among countries participating in the defence of the area.

The improvement of the nuclear panoplia of armaments influenced the field of Middle Eastern strategy in a rather ambiguous way. The primary importance of the Suez area as the most palatable base outside Europe for a counter offensive against the Soviet Union was tackled in 1952 by the Soviet experimentation of a termonuclear device. Big bases as the Cairo one, where 80.000 troops were supposed to be retained as far as in 1954, seemed to have become obsolete (because they offered perfect targets for huge megaton bombs and risked to be eliminated with a single shot ([33]); on the

other hand, as we soon shall see, following the results of the Global Review of Military Strategy, the value of retaliation (and,thus, of place from which to start it) seemed to be enhanced by the increase in bomb efficacity showed in early American tests of fusion devices and by the first test of a British atom bomb (both in 1952).

As we have already seen, from a military point of view, the Americans were eager to hear what could be a British contribution to the defense of the Middle East base and they would eventually be eager to send strategic bombers there, but could not possibily devote a part of their military budget for the defense of the area ([34]). A reassessment of the first approved short term military plan, the HALFMOON, convinced the JCS in October 1948 to discard the hypothesis of using as second alternative (after Great Britain) the Khartum-Cairo-Suez area -previously considered as a minimum requirement - as a base for SAC. Omar Bradley, head of the JCS, pointed out at the time how the financial difficulties experienced by the military would have made talks about the pros and cons of maintaining the Mediterranean preposterous ([35]). In the same period, the importance of having a strategic base in the United Kingdom was stressed. Following a previous tentative agreement and the deployment of two American bomber groups in connection with the Berlin crisis, a high level British-American meeting was called in the UK; the subject was the formalization of American military presence in Great Britain -both in the sense of acquiring

facilities and bringing the existing airfield up to B-29 operating standards ([36]).

As it was made clear by George McGhee in Febrary 1950 "the Near East may be critical to our national interests in time of war, but it is vital to us in time of peace" ([37]). This ment that American consideration went mostly to the importance of maintaining the Middle East out of Soviet influence in time of peace instead of defending it in time of peace.

American representatives remained "adamant" in their view that the Middle East theatre had to be under British responsability and still in 1952 they were against any "specific egagement" in the area ([38]). The "difference in emphasis" shown by the two countries was made plain during a conversation at the top levels between Admiral Fletcher (American Chief of Naval Operations) and Field Marshal Slim (British Chief of Imperial General Staff) held in May 1952. To the first's assumption that "if the Allies lost the Mediterranenan 'we would not have been hurt too much'", the second answered that "control of the Mediterranean was more important to the British than the naval support of SACEUR" ([39]).

Growing concerns over the central front, on the opposite, undermined the Middle East cause in Great Britain. The new consideration of Europe as being an integral part of the 'first pillar" (the defense of Great Britain itself) was coupled with the sending of additional British troops (one infantry division and 1/3) to reinforce the British Overseas Army on the Rhine in March 1951 and the growing assignement of troops to the central front should the war break out.

This was followed by the new formulation of the Review of Defence Policy and Global Strategy endorsed by the new Conservative Cabinet in September 1952. With the general aim of reducing economic costs of defence, COS placed primary reliance on the deterrent value of nuclear forces. As far as the Middle East was concerned, this meant that British garrisons "should be reduced to a level adequate only to meet Cold War requirements", relying heavily on the possibility of a quick reinforcement from the UK and elsewhere ([40]). Thus, "after a settlement had been reached with Egypt, the strategic reserve should be brought home and the UK forces in the Middle East reduced to about one division and 160 aircrafts". In number, it would mean cutting in two the existing number of 62.200 men British garrison in the Middle East: land forces should concentrate in Libya, Jordan, Cyprus and Malta -these last two territories being the only British colonies left in the Middle East- and air forces in Iraq, Jordan, Cyprus, Aden and Malta ([41]).The path was open for the redeployement of British military forces east of the Suez Canal around the two keystones of Jordan and Iraq and the consideration of local forces as being an essential part of an efective defence ([42]).

Attempts of coordinated measures for the Middle East

No fruitful cooperative measure was taken by western powers in the beginning of the fifties except for the Tripartite Declaration of

May 1950 (Great Britain, France and the United States). The most important features of the resolution were the following:

1.Arabs and Israelis needed a certain level of armed forces for the purpose of maintaining their internal security and their legitimate self-defence and permiting them to play their role in the defence of the area as a whole -the hidden ratio was that these countries would have called for Soviet help if their requests were not fullfilled by the western powers (as actually happened in 1955 with Egypt).

2. Should the three governments find that any of these states were preparing to violate frontiers or armistice lines, they would, in accordance with their obligations as members of the United Nations, immediately take action, both within and outside the UN to prevent such violation.

This last provision was never put into force (even because in its most patent violation, France and Great Brtain were parties in the case) and the resolution turned out to be nothing more than a means 1. to stabilize the frontier status originated from the first Arab-Israeli war (1948-49), thus sanctioning the disregard of the ONU partition plan of 1947; 2. to bypass the ONU resolution which had called for an embargo on arms sold towards Israel and the Arab countries.

While Great Britain was engaged in the last touches of the new agreement with Egypt -and the linked problems of redeployment- the United States took lead in the diplomatic effort over the Middle East. The change of Administration and the extensive visit of the

new Secretary of State Foster Dulles to the Middle East -Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India) were at the origin of this shift. The Americans had never been too enthousiastic about British proposals such as Middle East Command and Middle East Defence Organization developed in the first years of the fifties: these schemes, providing for the presence of external ex-colonial powers would have put the Americans in the embarassing position of supporters of what was defined by the Arabs as a new form of military colonialism. At the same time, the main aim of the US in the ME was preventing international communism to take any advantage of the unstable situation and not to struggle against anti-colonial nationalism. That is why, at the beggining, the revolution of the Egyptian Colonels in July 1952 was seen with simpathy and it was not until Foster Dulles and Nasser had personal contacts that the US set aside the idea of sponsoring Nasser's leadership over the Arab world as a stabilizing factor. Coming back from his mission, Dulles stated: "A Middle East organisation is a future rather than an immediate possibility. Many of the Arab League countries are so engrossed with their quarrels with Israel or with Great Britain or France that they pay little attention to the menace of Soviet communism. However, there is more concern where the Soviet Union is near". No collective security agreement with western participation was, thus, to be imposed from the outside. Dulles' remarks were reformulated in NSC 162/6 (October 1953): in order to assure the United States and its allies resources (oil) and the strategic assets of the area, the U.S. should build a defensive

bastion in Turkey, Pakistan and, if possible, Iran (revolved to pro-western attitudes after the CIA sponsored coup d'etat in the summer of 1953) a defensive bastion. The idea was not new. As a matter of fact, many years before (1947), the idea of a mutual defence agreement between Persia, Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan had been devised in the Foreign Office itself, with the support of the COS, to tackle the possibility of a coordinated Kurdish uprising in Turkey, Iraq and Iran ([43]), but the failure of the ephemeral independent republic of Azerbaigian in Iran had probably put an end to this idea. On the military side, since the Anglo-American defence Malta talks in the beginning of 1951 the value of India and Pakistan had been stressed by both Chiefs of Staff ([44]). But American proposals for a Norther Tier bastion, unofficially communicated to the British, had always found hostility in the political sphere because of the possible negative influence over the Pakistan-Indian dispute on Kashmir and thus discarded ([45]).

The innovation of such a proposal was the theoretical link established between Europe and the Far East via the Middle East, through the parallely stipulated South East Asia Treaty Organization (September 1954); an enormously extended safety belt around the Soviet Union was thus created -its pivotal centers being Turkey and Pakistan ([46]).

In practical terms, the American proposals, launched without any previous official warning to the Foreign Office, linked an offer of military aid to Pakistan, advanced at the end of 1953 and materialized in 1954, to the beginning of a sort of military

collaboration between Pakistan and Turkey, which might be eventually enlarged (as it was) to develop into a collective defence system for the whole Northern Tier. Foreign Office officials, when first informed about the nature and scope of the pact in January 1954, defined it "offensive" and suggested to discourage the Americans; Churchill did not agree with this suggestion, although he defined the proposal badly timed -just before the Berlin Four Power meeting ([47]).

After being temporarly released from the Egyptian problem with the signing of the agreement on the evacuation of the Canal base in October 1954, the British were, then, faced with the growing reality of an American sponsored Norther Tier bastion. At the same time, after the Anglo-Egyptian agreement new diplomatic forces were freed to take lead again in the diplomatic effort toward the resolution of the more dividing Middle East issue: the Arab-Israeli dispute.

After coming back from an extensive tour in the Middle East (Autumn 1954), the newly appointed British Under-Secretary for Middle Eastern Affairs Evelyn Shuckburgh pointed to its resolution as an essential step to solve two main problems: the restoration of stable relationships between Egypt and the Western powers and the prevention of the exploitation of the issue by the Soviets. Dulles and Eden agreed in December 1954 over the formulation of a peace plan to solve the Palestinian problem. Analogies with the question of Trieste were hastly drawn and the Italo-Jugoslavian agreement of October 1954 taken as proof of the efficacity of patient western diplomacy ([48]).

The anglo-american version of the plan was labelled ALPHA ([49]) and provided for a security garantee to Israel in exchange for territorial concession to Palestinians and new rules for refugees. The history of the diplomatic action and meetings of western representatives with Egyptian and Israel counterparts is far from clear -although the valid contributions of Shamir and Lucas, not to cite the biographical accounts, are clarifying. In spite of extensive efforts, by 30th August 1955, the plan seemed nothing more than "a beautiful dream" ([50]).

At this point, the Northern Tier bastion emerged as the only workable hypothesis for dealing with the question of Middle Eastern security. The Pact was clearly a means to bypass the two major difficulties which had been stressed by Dulles himself: Arab-Israeli dispute on one hand and Nasser's stubborness in refusing Western patronage on the Suez base and on the operative administration of the Canal coupled with a symmetric British strong refusal to release its authority (if not on the Base, on the Canal!).

After the accession of Iraq and the following official birth of the Bagdad Pact (February 1955) the British were confronted with the problem of American competitivness over the military support to Iraq -one of the pivotal countries for the redeployment of British forces and whose leader, Nuri Said, was seen as the only suitable candidate to an anti-Nasser leadership. They decided to enter the pact (March 1955) ([51]) and tried to transform it from a military containment tool agaist the Soviet Union to a political tool against Egypt. British participation in the Pact was, thus, mainly supported by the aim of

creating a new political force, under Nuri Said's leadership, which could oppose the growing appeal of Nasser in the Arab world. That's why, while joining the Pact, the United Kingdom reinforced their ties with Levant countries, especially with the Hashemite governors of Jordan and Iraq -historically linked to Great Britain through bilateral military pacts- in a anti-nasserian perspective. British attempts came to an abrupt end in December 1955 when pressure to make Jordan associate with the Pact ended in mass riots. Jordan not only did not join, but the British had to dismantle the last stronghold of British military presence in the area, the famous Jordan Arab legion; its commander, the last living remeniscence of Lawrence of Arabia, General Glubb, better known with the onorific title of Glubb Pasha, was dismissed by King Hussein in March 1956 ([52]).

After a long series of failures, the British approach to the Middle East security question was reduced step by step to a tentative peacemeal. This tactic was devised -as it has been argued by important scholars as Baylis and Bartlett ([53])- to allow any possibile option open while waiting for greater resources to become available. This incrementalism ended up to be counter-productive and contributed to undermine British position in the sense that, without a coherent vision of how to tackle the Middle East security problem, Great Britain became more prone to rapsodic diplomatic and military actions.

The inconclusivness of this kind of approach was best proved by the Suez crisis which could neither be prevented by the United States nor won by France and Great Britain.

The Suez affair clearly showed how dangerous the use of military means was to keep old political privileges; on the other hand it opened the path for a more resolute American intervention. British hegemony was perishing not only because of the difficulties of reshaping its Middle East policy but because it had been shaken by the search for a common ground with the United States -which had been at last ideally defined as being the military realm (Bagdad Pact)- and by the ineffectiveness of this tool with respect to the big security issues of the area.

This was a perfect time, for the U.S., to come into the picture: not having been associated too strongly with the British, having kept the public image of anti-colonial power, they could now begin to set their own path for the security of the Middle East without necessarily having to consult with any partner and to cooperate in devising new policies -as they had before.

The so called 'Eisenhower doctrine' (January 1957), with its stress on economic technical assistance to the Middle East, seemed to be devised in the mainstream of the concept stemming out from the point IV Truman declaration about underdeveloped countries. At the same time, it focused on military intervention against a communist menace to any state vitally important for American national security and this turned out to be its most outstanding feature. The first American military intervention took place in Jordan in 1957 to

support the Hashemit king Hussein against a coup d'Etat by alledged pro-Nasser officials; the other in 1958 in Lebanon in support of President Chamoun . On this occasion, Eisenhower was ironically rebuked by MacMillan of "doing a Suez" on the British. He was not too far from reality: the difference was that the United States were both military and politically more skillful and powerful.

British retreat from the Eastern Mediterranean- Middle East could have repres ented an opportunity to reshape the whole question and focus on the solution of the real divisive issues. American pattern of military intervention -so similar to the previously critized in their European partners- put an end to this hope.

* The author wishes to thank Professor Alastair Parker and Dr.Scott Lucas for incisive comments on the paper and the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche for the financial contribution related to archive researches in London.

1.American officials working in the ERP estimated in July 1949 that, by the end of the Marshall Plan, Europe would be dependant over Middle East oil for 80% of its needs. Actual percentage was not far from American forecast. Bruce Kuniholm, U.S. Policy in the Near East: the triumph and tribulations of the Truman Administration, in Michael Lacey, The Truman Presidency, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 309; Howard Sachar, Europe leaves the Middle East, 1936-1954, London, Allen Lane, 1974 (I ed. 1972), pp. 395-398.
2.The British version was named DOUBLEQUICK and the American HALFMOON; PRO, DEFE 4/13, COS (48)79th, June 9, 1948.
3.PRO, DEFE 4/23, JP (49)59 Final, July 11, 1949, approved at COS (49) 102nd, July 15, 1949.
4.On the internal process of decision making see Robert Frazier, "Did Britain Start the Cold War? Bevin and the Truman Doctrine", The Historical Journal, 1984, 3, pp. 720-721.
5.Attlee had suggested a retrechment into Africa through a protective line going from Lagos to Kenya -to be military substained by a big military base in Kenya. This withdrawal was suggested by both political-military and economic interests. Christopher John Bartlett, The Long Retreat. A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-1970, London, MacMillan, 1970, p. 16; John Gallagher, The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p.145.
6.Phillip Darby, Britain Defence Policy East of Suez, 1945-1968, University Press, London, 1973, p.11; C.J. Bartlett, op. cit., p. 13; FRUS 1947, V, The British Embassy to the Department of State, Two Aide-memoirs, February 21, 1947, pp. 32-37.
7.Anthony Eden, Full Circle, Boston, 1960, pp. 374-375.
8.FRUS, 1947, V, Chronological Summary..., Memorandum prepared by the Department of State (Pentagon Talks), undated, p.490.
9. PRO, CAB 131/2, Future of Italian Colonies. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, March 13, 1946, Annex, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (now published on A. N.Porter and A.J.Stockwell (eds.), British Imperial Policy and Decolonization, 1938-1964, vol I (1938-1951), Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1987, pp. 243-247.
10.FRUS 1947, V, Memorandum prepared in the Department of State, undated pp.575-576.
11.Bruce Robert Kuniholm,The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East. Great Power conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980. Kuniholm's thesis has been confirmed in his more recent The Near East Connection: Greece, Turkey in the Reconstruction and Security of Europe, 1946-1952, Brookline, Hellenic Press, 1984.
12.FRUS, 1947, V, Memorandum by the Chiefs of the Division of South Asian Affairs (Hare) -cleared with Henderson (Director, Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs), Hickerson (Director, Office of European Affairs) and Henry Villard (Member PPS), November 5, 1947, p. 579.
13.J. Gallagher, op. cit., p. 113.

14.For exemple, see PRO, PREM 8/1478, COS (49) 381, November 10, 1949, Chiefs of Staff Commitee, Strategic Implications of an independent and united Lybia.
15.These are Eden's words pronounced during a Cabinet meeting, PRO, CAB 128/26, February 11, 1953.
16.FRUS, 1949, VI, Annex to Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of African and Near Eastern Affairs, November 18, 1949, Statement by the US and UK groups, November 14, 1949, p. 62.
17.FRUS 1949, VI, Annex 1 to Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East, South Asian and African Affairs (Hare) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State (Rusk), Statement by the US and UK Groups, November 14, 1949, p. 463.
18.FRUS, 1952-54, IX, Memorandum of Conversation by the Politico-Military Adviser, Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, April 24, 1952, pp. 219-220.
19.The phrasing of the so called Truman's "point four" was the following: "Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progresses available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas". Department of State Bulletin, January 30, 1949, p. 125.
20.Massimo De Leonardis, I "tre cerchi": il Regno Unito e la ricerca della sicurezza tra Commonwealth, Europa e "relazione speicale" con gli Stati Uniti (1948-1949), in Ottavio Barie' (ed.), L'Alleanza Occidentale. Nascita e sviluppi di un sistema di sicurezza collettivo, Bologna , Il Mulino, 1988, p. 60.
21.PRO, CAB 130/64, Meeting of Official Committee on preparation for Commonwealth Prime Minister Meeting, Memorandum by the Foreign Office, December 7, 1950 (approved by the COS).
22.Ibidem; over the inexistance of a Soviet threat in 1950, see also Giampaolo Valdevit, "American Policy in the Mediterranean: the operational codes, 1945-1952", EUI Working Paper 87/310, pp. 23-24
23.FRUS 1951, V, Draft Study by the NSC, The Position of the United States aith respect to the general area of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, pp. 258; PRO, CAB 131/9, DO (50)58, July 21, 1950, Memorandum COS on Ability of the Armed Forces to meet an emergency.
24.The Americans talked about the absence of "a power center on the basis of which a pact could be built". FRUS, 1950, V, Regional Security Arrangements in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern Area, May 11, 1950, p.156.
25. Its only unifying elements being the struggle against French and British presence in the area and that one against Israel British Interests in the Mediterranean and Middle East, A Report by a Chatham House Study Group, London/New York, Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 13-14.
26.In military terms, the practical outcomes of Anglo-American military conversations of 1951 showed that the US did not intend to tackle bilaterally the problem of the defence of oil installations -the US being committed (not without ambiguities) to the sole defence of Dhaharan complex (operated by ARAMCO) with air protection and anti-sabotage measures held from American bases in Saudi Arabia, while the British being interested to the protection of their

interests in the whole Gulf area.JCS Files, (Liddell Hart Centre), The Middle East, JCS 1887/22, Letter from Carney to the Chief of Naval Operations, May 16, 1951; JCS 1887/26, October 3, 1951; JCS 1887/53, September 4, 1952.
27.Martin H. Folly "Britain and the issue of Italian Membership of NATO, 1948-49", Review of International Studies, July 1987, pp. 177-196.
28.David Devereux, Britain and the Failure of Collective Defence in the Middle East, 1948-53, in Ann Deighton (ed.), Britain and the First Cold War, Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1990, pp.240-241.
29.PRO, PREM 11/44, From Chief Air Staff and First Lord of the Sea to Minister of Defence, November 21, 1952; PREM 11/44, COS (S) 17th, November 28, 1952. Lord Mountbatten's Command was activated in March 1953, after approval by the Atlantic Council in December 1952; Walter Poole, The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, vol. IV, 1950-52, Washington, Historical Division Joint Secretariat Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1979, p. 317.
30.PRO, CAB 129/65, C(54)9, January 9, 1954, Middle East Defence, memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff.
31.PRO, CAB 129/58, C(53) 17 (revised), Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, January 14, 1953.
32.Idem (the document emerged from diplomatic-military conversations over Egypt between Great Britain and the United States in London held in January 1953).
33.PRO, CAB 128/27, July 7, 1954; CAB 129/70, C(54) 248, July 23 1954, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
34.American military budgets begun to increase after the Korean War i.e.in fiscal year 1950-51.
35.HALFMOON was approved by the JCS on May 19 1948, distributed to military commands some months later with the name of FLEETWOOD and renamed DOUBLESTAR in 1949. NAW, RG 218, box 380, CCS 381 USSR (3-2-46), sec. 31, PM-876, April 6, 1949; JCS files (microfilms, EUI) Strategic Issues, Sec. II, reel 10, JCS Transcript of meeting held in the Pentagon building on 2/3/5 October 1948.
36.Simon Duke, US Defence Basis in the United Kingdom. A Matter of Joint Decision?, London, MacMillan, 1987, p. 51; Simon Duke, United States Military Forces and Installations in Europe, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 293-295.
37.Cited in W. Scott Lucas, The Path to Suez: Britain and the Struggle for the Middle East, 1953-56, in Ann Deighton (ed.), op. cit., p. 256. In late 1950, however, the JCS would have stressed again that, for planning purposes, the Middle East was considered in a lower category than Western Europe and they would have equally maintained it to be "critical rather than vital" from a military point of view. Thus the JCS were opposed to obligating combatant forces to the Middle East in the initial stages of a global war. JCS Files, Liddell Hart Centre, The Middle East, JCS 1887/6, revised on October 25, 1950.
38.PRO, CAB 131/9, D.O. (50) 97, Meeting of United States- United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, October 1950, Report by the Chiefs of Staff, November 21, 1950. JCS files (microfilms EUI) Europe and

NATO, part II, reel 7, JCS 1868/346, Organizing and Establishing the Middle Eastern Command, February 2, 1952.
39. Cited in W. Poole, op. cit., p. 314.
40.CAB 131/12, D (52)41, September 29, 1952, Memorandum of COS on the Defence Program. This is the best indirect primary source on D (52) 26, September 29, 1952, Defence Policy and Global Strategy, which will not be open before 2003.
41.PRO, DEFE 7/796, Ministry of Defence on redeployment plan in the Middle East, January 21, 1954. Approved by CAB on January 26, 1954. Location of forces and redeployement was actually a never ending story; political opportunites as well as phisical and financial resources spurred the Government to continuous changes in esteemes.
42.PRO, CAB 129/65, C (54) 17 revised, January 20, 1954, Memorandum of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Stationing of British Forces in Jordan.
43.PRO, DEFE 4/10, JP (47) 158, Final, December 30, 1947.
44.FRUS, 1951, V, CINCNELM and Commanders in Chief, Middle East to British Chief of Staff and US JCS, March 13 1951, pp. 94-95.
45.Ayesha Jalal, "Towards the Baghdad Pact: South Asia and Middle East Defence in the Cold War, 1947-1955", The International History Review, August 1989, pp. 422-424.
46. While Turkey participated to both NATO and the Bagdad Pact, Pakistan joined both this last pact and SEATO -which was formed by the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zeland, Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan.
47.PRO, CAB 129/65, C(54) 4, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on US Project to associate military aid to Pakistan with the Middle East Defence, January 5, 1954.
48.Shimon Shamir, The Collapse of Project Alpha, in Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), Suez 1956. The Crises and its Consequences, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 84-85. Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez: Diaries, 1951-1956, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986, pp. 242-315.
49.Not to be confused with the GAMMA plan devised by the Americans in November 1955 after the news about the Egyptian arms dealing with Czechoslovakia; the plan, CIA's sponsored, aimed to the setting up of covert propaganda operations to undermine Nasser's leadership in Egypt and in the Middle East. S. Shamir, art. cit., p. 80.
50.E. Shuckburgh, op. cit., p. 275.
51.Great Britain was followed by Pakistan (September) and Iran (November).
52.Thomas A.Bryson, American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East, 1784-1975: A Survey, Metuchen (N.J.), The Scarecrow Press, 1977, pp. 184-186.
53.C.J. Bartlett, op. cit., p. 44; John Baylis, British Defence Policy. Striking the Right Balance, London, MacMillan, 1989, pp. 1-4.

EUI WORKING PAPERS

EUI Working Papers are published and distributed by the
European University Institute, Florence

Copies can be obtained free of charge – depending on the availability of stocks – from:

The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

Please use order form overleaf

Publications of the European University Institute

To The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

From Name . . . . . .

Address . . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

❒ Please send me a complete list of EUI Working Papers
❒ Please send me a complete list of EUI book publications
❒ Please send me the EUI brochure Academic Year 1990/91

Please send me the following EUI Working Paper(s):

No, Author . . . . . .
Title: . . . . . .
No, Author . . . . . .
Title: . . . . . .
No, Author . . . . . .
Title: . . . . . .
No, Author . . . . . .
Title: . . . . . .

Date . . . . . .

Signature . . . . . .

EUI Working Papers as from 1990

As from January 1990, the EUI Working Papers Series is divided into six sub-series, each series is numbered individually (i.e. EUI Working Paper HEC No. 90/1; ECO No. 90/1; LAW No. 90/1; SPS No. 90/1; EPU No. 90/1; ECS No. 90/1).

March 1991

Working Papers in History

HEC No. 90/1
Elisabeth ELGAN/Jan GRÖNDAHL
Single Mothers in Early Twentieth Century Sweden:Two Studies

HEC No. 90/2
Jean-Pierre CAVAILLÉ
Un théâtre de la science et de la mort à l'époque baroque: l'amphithéâtre d'anatomie de Leiden

HEC No. 90/3
Jean-François DUBOST
Significations de la lettre de naturalité dans la France des XVIe et XVIIe siècles

HEC No. 90/4
Alan BOOTH/Joseph MELLING
Trade Unions Strategies and Productivity: A Suggested Framework

HEC No. 90/5
Bo STRÅTH
Union Strategies in Historical Perspective: Sweden and Germany

HEC No. 90/6
Patrizia GUARNIERI
The Psyche in "Trance": Inquiries into Hypnotism

* * *

HEC No. 91/7
Bonnie G. SMITH
On Writing Women's Work

HEC No. 91/8
Marie Dominique COUZINET
La logique divine dans les *Six livres de la République* de Jean Bodin. Hypothèse de lecture

HEC No. 91/9
Nuno Severiano Teixeira
From Neutrality to Alignment: Portugal in the Foundation of the Atlantic Pact

HEC No. 91/10
Lorenza SEBESTA
The Middle East and European Security in the Fifties: A Historical Assessment